

RE-HOUSING PEOPLE RAPIDLY SO THAT THEY DO NOT BECOME HOMELESS

GOAL: Your community has skilled housing search and housing placement services available to rapidly re-house all people losing their housing or who are homeless and who want permanent housing.

One of the primary challenges homeless people face is navigating the housing market. Most communities have a shortage of housing affordable for low-income households. Consequently, landlords can select the most appealing tenants, many of whom have higher incomes, and require a large sum of cash for a deposit and first and last months rent. There is little incentive for landlords to work with potential tenants who have lower incomes, little savings, credit problems, or unstable housing histories.

Housing placement services can address many of the barriers homeless people face. Effective housing search services often include the following elements:

- Skilled housing search staff with knowledge of local housing markets and relationships with landlords
- Marketing and outreach to landlords
- Incentives for landlords to rent to homeless households
- Assurances to landlords that the housing services agency will assist with landlord/tenant problems.
- Access to subsidies, such as vouchers, for households with extremely low incomes
- Coordination with service providers to ensure that a homeless person's service needs are met once he or she is in permanent housing
- Periodic follow-up work to prevent a housing crisis
- Services to address credit problems

The skills necessary to effectively place homeless people in private market housing combine those of a realtor and a caseworker. Locating and developing qualified staff is one of the greatest challenges to having an effective housing search and placement system.

Examples

Beyond Shelter (Los Angeles, California) Since 1988, Beyond Shelter has been assisting homeless families with children move into permanent housing. Housing search staff help families negotiate leases, access move-in funds, and overcome the barriers of poor credit history, prior evictions, and discrimination based on ethnicity, family size and income source. Approximately half of the 400 families served each year are headed by a parent in recovery. For more information, see:

<http://www.endhomelessness.org/best/beyondshelter.htm>

Philadelphia Housing Support Center (Philadelphia, Pennsylvania) The Center is a one-stop housing resource center that combines services from various state agencies with skilled housing search staff. They partner with the local housing authority to provide housing choice vouchers and family unification vouchers. For more information, see:

<http://www.endhomelessness.org/best/SupportCenter.htm>

HomeStart (Boston, Massachusetts) HomeStart provides families and individuals with skilled housing search assistance in one of the tightest housing markets in the country. Voluntary stabilizations services help newly housed families and individuals deal with landlord/tenant conflicts. HomeStart also contracts with state agencies to provide housing search services for people involved in various state administered programs. For more information, see: <http://www.endhomelessness.org/best/homestart.htm>

Rapid Exit (Hennepin County, Minnesota) Rapid Exit provides housing relocation assistance to families with moderate to severe barriers to housing. Within one week of entering a shelter, families are referred for a housing barriers assessment. Rapid Exit caseworkers then help families find permanent housing and coordinate any needed follow-up services. For more information, see:

<http://www.endhomelessness.org/best/rapidexit.htm>

Resource

"Using HOME Program Funds to Address the Challenges of Homelessness" -- Notice issued by the U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development in August 2003 to provide guidance to Field Offices, Participating Jurisdictions (PJs) and HOME Investment Partnerships Program Grantees in the use of HOME Program funds to assist individuals and families who are homeless or at risk of homelessness.

<http://www.hud.gov/offices/cpd/lawsregs/notices/2003/03-08.pdf>